

377th Mission Support Squadron

Unit provides support, services for entire TEAM KIRTLAND

BY 2ND LT. ROSE RICHESON
377th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

The 377th Mission Support Squadron is a diverse unit made up of six flights which provide commander, first sergeant and administrative services to the 377th Air Base Wing and 377th Mission Support Group staff, 377th Communications and 377th Civil Engineer Divisions and the Airborne Laser Program.

The six flights: Airman Leadership School, First Term Airman Center, Military Personnel Flight, Civilian Personnel Flight, Education and Training Flight and the Family Support Center. The squadron serves 3,500 active duty military, 2,000 DOD civilians, 13,000 retirees and 1,500 Air National Guard and Army, Navy and Marine Reserve personnel.

Maj. Daniel Ponce de Leon, squadron commander, believes his squadron is "blessed with great talent, unselfish dedication and a can-do attitude. We have over 100 years of core experience at the flight commander and commander levels which are key to the squadron's success."

This leadership directly resulted in five Air Force Materiel Command awards:

- ★ Best Airman Leadership School Instructor, Staff Sgt. Erin Landers
- ★ Best Senior Family Support Specialist, Teresa Reinhard
- ★ Best Training Manager, Circe Woessner
- ★ Best Education Services
- ★ Best Mission Support Squadron

During fiscal year 2003, the Family Support Center provided information and referral services to 18,000 customers. They cared for 1,050 deployed Airmen and their families by conducting pre- and post-deployment readiness briefings, 24 support group meetings, three holiday dinners and 12 youth field trips.

The center also partnered with Van Buren Middle School to employ and mentor 90 at-risk youths by helping to develop their work skills, confidence and self-esteem.

The Military Personnel Flight partnered with the 377th Comptrollers Squadron to help resolve 790 pay-related cases, totaling over \$8 million in back pay and bonuses.

With only four Common Access Card stations, the flight issued over 8,500 cards in six months and 12,000 throughout the year. They also in-processed, separated and retired over 3,000 military members this year.

Reverting to the civilian side, the Civilian Personnel Flight has continued to make significant improvements. The flight has built partnerships with the American Federation of Government Employees Local 2263 by initiating negotiations to update the 1988 labor contract. The Civilian Personnel Flight also led a 99.53 percent work year execution rate with emphasis on filling permanent positions.

The 377th Mission Support Squadron, in support of force development, also offers Airmen educational and developmental programs through the Education and Training Flight, First Term Airman Center and Airman Leadership School.

The Education and Training Flight's Distance Learning Center alone saved the Air Force \$1 million in temporary duty costs avoidance and organization training costs when it increased local satellite course offerings by 400 percent. Flight members also counseled and encouraged 180 Airmen to achieve their Community College of the Air Force degrees.

ABOVE TOP: Tech. Sgt. Brian Cyr (left), and Senior Airman Ashley Metz, 377th Mission Support Squadron, work together providing Personnel Support for a contingency operations exercise during a 377th Mission Support Squadron training day.

RIGHT: Airman 1st Class Robert Davis, 377th Security Forces Squadron, Airman 1st Class Daniel Arbach, Air Force Research Laboratory, and Airman Thomas Hennessee, 898th Munitions Squadron, dig dirt and fill in rough spots on trail 162, David Canyon, Tijeras, N.M., for a First Term Airman Center project.

The First Term Airman Center graduated 350 Airmen, providing them with the knowledge and skills to excel during this first assignment. The Airman Leadership School graduated 548, expertly providing them with supervisory skills. In addition, staff members helped train 131 noncommissioned officers during the Staff Sergeant Professional Development Course.

Major Ponce de Leon said of his squadron, that there are absolutely "no weak links," and, in fact, he is privileged to command a group of totally committed individuals standing ready to serve our wing, base and community.



Photo by Dennis Carlson



Photo by Todd Berenger



Photo by Keith Petersen



Photo by Staff Sgt. Markus Maier



TOP RIGHT-The 377th Mission Support Squadron's Family Support Center helped sponsor the TEAM KIRTLAND Easter egg hunt and festivities for over 600 children at Hardin Field, April 10. The event included jumping castles, clowns, balloon artists and the Easter bunny.

Photo by Lisa Gonzales

ABOVE LEFT-Airman Leadership School graduates received awards during the April 2 graduation ceremony. Pictured from left to right are, Senior Airman Lacey Thomas, John L. Levitow Award; Senior Airman Jeremy R. White, Academic Achievement Award; and Senior Airman Joseph E. Cox, Leadership Award.

ABOVE RIGHT-Steven Parker, Civilian Personnel Flight chief, keeps himself busy dealing with everyday issues and concerns from civilian members of TEAM KIRTLAND.

LEFT-Tech. Sgt. Alonzo Wright, 550th Special Operations Squadron, registers for assistance at the Military Personnel Flight while Staff Sgt. Dawn Tatum, 377th Mission Support Squadron, attends to other customers.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Markus Maier